

Abstract for the Conference on ‘Glocal Places of Literature: Production – Reception - Distribution’

Readership, Social Ethos and the ‘Glocalized’ Indian English Fiction

My paper proposes to engage with the rise of Indian genre fiction in English in the 90s decade and after. The economic liberalization that took place in 1991 has changed the terms of engagement with nation and given birth to a new consumerist social ethos. In the subsequent years the liberalization induced global processes have influenced both the public and private discourses of India. The previous decades saw the rise of numerous authors who through their literary merit had presented Indian lives and tales to an international readership, but the story changed in the post-liberalization period. Though themes like ‘nostalgia for the past’, ‘individual and the nation’ ‘diasporic dilemma’ were quite relevant even during the 1990s, the contour gradually start changing with the appearance of a host of new authors within the literary arena of India. These include authors like Chetan Bhagat, Durjoy Datta, Ravinder Singh, Anuja Chauhan, Sudeep Nagarkar, Amish Tripathi and many more. Critics like Priya Joshi have remarked that this was the moment when the Indian English novel ‘stopped being a child of the midnight’.

Through studying this phenomenal rise of a new form of Indian English novel writing, my paper would seek to analyze the complex network within which these ‘popular’ novels are produced and circulated. By attempting a ‘bibliographical sociology’ this paper would also engage with the questions of cultural capital and the rise of the new middle class, with a sizeable number among them being that of the Indian youths. The readership and the social impulses that emerge out of this wide network of contemporary Indian English novels have been studied in this paper, not through an analysis of their literariness, instead an idea of the social attitudes and market will be offered through my nuanced interactions with an array of people involved in the book trade – from small scale booksellers, retailers, literary agents to editorial and marketing professionals.

Bio

Sambuddha Jash has completed his Masters and M.Phil in English literature from University of Delhi, India. Presently he is pursuing his PhD from the Department of English, University of Delhi. He is working on the growth of Indian English genre fiction writing in the 90s decade and after. His work is based on the sociological analysis of the cosmopolitan culture in globalised India and its impactful creation of readership spaces. His work interrogates this space which is located at the cusp of aspirational necessity through which Indian English genre fiction is trying to negotiate with the global and the local. He has presented papers in national and international conferences. His areas of interests are African-American literature, Cultural Studies, Book History, Gender studies, and the Literature of the Progressive Writers Association.